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Pelikan's Antidisambiguation-Size, Money, Risk

Michael P. Pelikan

Penn State University, mpp10@psu.edu

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Pelikan's Antidisambiguation — Size, Money, Risk

Column Editor: **Michael P. Pelikan** (Penn State) <mp10@psu.edu>

The rise of the iPad has had a shaping influence on the business of publishing and selling digital content, among which reading material still has a role to play. I think it's too much to say that the iPad has defined the device market, insofar as it was, itself, produced in response to other devices that scooped out sections of beach, creating tidal pools. Apple took a look and thought the water looked pretty good. So, yes, the iPad (and its joined-at-the-hip little brother, the iPhone) have showed up at the beach, carrying a big shovel, and stomping with big feet across the carefully-created castles, aqueducts, and moats created by the smaller kids.

Apple can dominate, but it doesn't always initiate, despite the popular folklore. Nevertheless, once on the scene, all must respond, work around, or find some way to weather the presence on the playing field of the supremely confident rich kid.

Rich kids sometimes like to make their own rules. The 30% cut on any content sold through their boutique is a nice example. For the matter, so is the exclusivity of that boutique itself. True, while the other e-matter retailers compete with each other by offering service, storage, access, etc., to persuade you to "eat in" rather than "take out," only Apple never lets you leave the mall. For those who are willing to invest the time to learn a few rudimentary stitches, making movable the content one has licensed from these other boutiques is fairly simple. Perhaps I'm old-fashioned, but the idea of locally-held backup copies of content I've "purchased" quiets the mind. Now again, to be precise, I really don't mean "purchased" — we hardly purchase anything anymore — at least not digital stuff — I mean content for which I have paid a licensing fee and to which I therefore have access.

But back to the story. The tablet market existed before Apple did its can-

nonball into the pool. It just wasn't particularly fashionable. A tablet was functional, ideally-suited to certain kinds of uses, but nobody saw it as a fashion accessory. It wasn't the iPad that changed all that, however. It was the Kindle. For a couple to a few hundred dollars, you could have a very elegant, nicely-made device that could carry your entire library, consolidated into a single, slim device. Even better, you could buy a rainbow of covers and accessories to personalize your Kindle, to make it really say something about who you are. And best yet, at least from Amazon's perspective, you could shop for, purchase, and download new content anywhere, directly to the device, at impulse purchase pricing. All in all, a really good deal for everybody, even the publishers, once they gave up the fight and agreed to do it Amazon's way.

Apple doesn't like not being the flashiest dress on the red carpet. If Amazon bared a shoulder, Apple was, by golly, going to show just how far a neckline could be made to plunge, and the laws of physics be damned.

Out came the iPad — the device that made it not only fashionable to carry a tablet, but made it mandatory, at least, if one wished to remain among the elect. Oh, and you content providers, we're offering you the most desirable address on the street, so a 30% cut to the store is a bargain — really it is, Dears, for after all, that's simply how the game is played, and we all know it.

Well, the iPad was nice, though a bit spendy for the consumer. Not professional laptop spendy, not quite, but a little more than consumer camera spendy. More than simply an impulse purchase, yet not entirely out of reach — so really, it was more like a life decision: one with a comparatively modest financial threshold for

entry, but promising proportionally great rewards from a lifestyle perspective. Really a no-brainer. One had to have one.

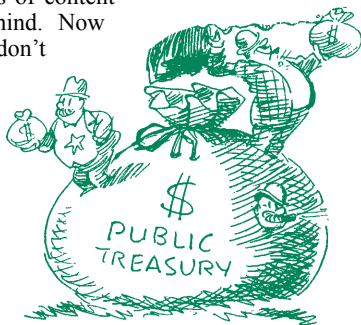
After all, it could do what the Kindle did, and so much more. Certainly, you could carry your entire library, but you could also surf the Web (in color, no less), buy music (from iTunes), and play games (purchased from Apple). Never mind that the iPad's battery life was measured in hours rather than weeks. Never mind that it was heavier than the Kindle, and bigger, too.

The vast and diverse capabilities of the iPad were a selling point, but there remained a market for devices centered on reading. The electrophoretic display of the Kindle was unsurpassed for readability, especially outdoors or anywhere the gleamingly shiny screen of the iPad became a liability rather than an asset. A friend of mine who was an early buyer of the iPad (but kept his Kindle) observed that the iPad was actually a multi-hundred-dollar mirror, which you could also use as a tablet under the right conditions.

Amazon, however, was quick to recognize the threat that the iPad represented — and so did Barnes and Noble, and Sony too, neither of whom I've actually forgotten to mention. In fact, it was Barnes and Noble who fired the first responding salvo with the introduction of the Nook Color. An Android device, actually, which brought Google into the story. Google has been there all along, really. Android smartphones had emerged as more than an irritant to Apples planned domination of the smartphone market — much more, in fact, a genuine threat. Apple wasn't the only player in the game in which smartphone users were using their smartphones like little tablets. Barnes and Noble and Kindle and Sony leapt in with Android apps, effectively turning your Android phone into a Kindle, a Nook, a Sony Reader, or all three.

Well, this was the point in the story at which the biggest pie fight in history (except

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The Benefit of Getting Everyone on the Same Page ... from page 51

The desire on the part of librarians for better access to COUNTER-compliant data from publishers was a standard echo across the feedback from the participants in our study. But some are looking beyond titles, packages, and publishers to discipline-level analytics. According to one subject librarian, the ability to integrate disciplinary data silos could, in turn, help eliminate budgetary silos.

Many librarians predicted a coming shift to pay-per-view models, which would reduce the need to rely on usage statistics analytics. A number of these librarians also noted that eBook usage statistics would soon be a key part of the overall conversation.

In addition, there seems to be ample room for vendors to improve proprietary usage-analysis tools. This vision was offered by a medical

school serials librarian, who summed up an ideal solution: "One day I could imagine the development of an integrated usage collection and analysis tool that relies on all the metrics described in this survey and can be used by librarians in determining journal value based on usage."

Some outlooks are a bit pessimistic. For instance, one collections development librarian foresees "continued spotty coverage, unreliable data collection, and lack of cooperation among vendors."

Despite the frustrations and challenges related to usage statistics and the means by which they are leveraged, the overall consensus is that improvement is inevitable in standardization and integration across the continuum. Where most agree, though, is that this evolution will require a partnering of libraries, publishers, and agents.

Ultimately, our ATG survey reveals that usage statistics will prove most useful — for librarians, students, researchers, and even my sympathetic friends — when all segments of the information industry get on the same page. 🌱



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for the epic battle in the Great Race) broke out. All lines between types and classes of devices became blurred to the point of disappearance. A year or more of total hilarity ensued.

Then a funny thing began to happen to smartphones. Some of them started to get bigger. Not as big as a tablet, but incrementally larger — never to the point of market rejection, but just to the edge of inducing an initial response such as “Good Grief! Look at the size of that phone!”

As well, a few tablets began to get smaller. The much overlooked **Nook Tablet** was not much bigger than a standard **Kindle** — thicker, heavier, battery life measured in hours not in weeks, etc., but it was a tablet that reached down into the form factor space of the eBook reader, even as the smartphones were edging up in size.

The Asus-built, Google-branded **Nexus 7** is the present culmination of all this development. It looks like a huge smartphone. You can hold it in one hand like a phone, cradled in your hand with your thumb on one edge and your fingers on the opposite edge. You almost find yourself wondering why it isn't a phone. Well, the answer is that it isn't a phone — it's a tablet. You

can run **Skype** on it, so you could teleconference with your colleagues wherever — almost anywhere, actually. But it's primarily a tablet. The screen is extremely high-resolution. The processor is running four cores. It has a 4325-milliamp-hour battery (comparatively huge). It should run all day, doing whatever you want, and often several things at a time. The bloody screen is still way too shiny — nobody touches e-Ink for general reading — but the appeal of the form factor combined with its significant computing power and its access to the entire **Android OS** universe of applications would make it a very serious contender at almost any typical price — even the price of an **iPad**.

And there's the catch — for **Apple**, at least. The **Nexus 7** is selling for \$200 for the 8Gb model, \$250 for the 16Gb version. Suffice it to say, they are flying off the shelves. Many retailers have sold out of their initial allocation and are waiting with unparalleled appetite for more.

Small wonder, then, that **Apple** has sashayed its silken skirts and let slip a few glimpses of a 7-inch **iPad** tucked into its thigh holster...

Oh yeah. It's going to be a great Holiday Season.

The **Nexus 7** looks really, really nice. But I just got my suit back from the cleaners and don't want to get any pie on it... 🍷

Rumors from page 48

This issue of **ATG** is ably guest-edited by the effervescent team of **Liz Lorbeer** and **Rossi Morris**. What a group of great papers they have put together! The article on the **Impact Factor** by the glamorous **Liz** (did you know she misses the snow and here she is living in Alabama?) covers many of the issues regarding this controversial metric. (this issue, p.14) Related — I noticed an article in the **Wall Street Journal** the other day (“Journals’ Ranking System Roils Research” by **Gautam Nauk**) about the same impact factor and journal metrics when what to my wondering eyes should appear but a reference to the famous **Phil Davis** a **Charleston Conference** regular when we can get him!

While we are on **Against the Grain**, we have a **letter to the editor** in this issue from **Mark Schumacher** about a couple of misspellings we overlooked. And **Ramune Kubilius** points out that in the June 2012 **ATG**, in a few places, **J. Michael Homan**'s name became **J. Mitchell Homan**... (e.g., p. 1 and in the TOC on p.4). We apologize for the errors. I just got a new pair of glasses and hopefully a second proofreader! OOPS!

Speaking of which, **Bill Matthews** (Director of Business Development, HighWire) <bmatthews@highwire.stanford.edu> will be speaking about **mobile web usage and trends** in **Charleston 2012** and he was hoping to get **Phil Davis** to participate but, sadly, **Phil** is not available that week of the **Charleston Conference** (for myself, I think in the future we should declare that week a holiday so that no one schedules anything to conflict with us! Agree?)

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